

# ***A Citizen's Guide to Terrorism Preparedness***

## **Standard Print Version**

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### **What is terrorism?**

The FBI defines terrorism as, "the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives."

### **Who is a terrorist?**

The history of modern terrorism spans a diverse range of people, cultures, and beliefs. Vigilance requires citizens of Maryland to avoid stereotypes to counter the terrorist's most effective tool – surprise.

### **What are my chances of becoming a victim of terrorism?**

Fortunately, the chance of being injured or killed in a terrorist incident is remote. While not minimizing the tragedy of recent events, every month more people die nation-wide from automobile accidents than died in the collapse of the World Trade Towers.

Marylanders, however, cannot become complacent and assume an "it can't happen here" attitude, yet they must not also allow the threat of terrorism to prevent them from living normal lives. Key to managing this dilemma is to remain alert, report suspicious objects and activities to authorities, and have thought through a plan on how to react if an emergency arises regardless of time of day or location.

### **What can I do?**

Many of the steps you take in response to natural disasters apply to a terrorist incident. The American Red Cross makes the following common-sense recommendations:

- ☒ *Remain calm and be patient.*
- ☒ *Follow the advice of local emergency officials.*
- ☒ *Listen to your radio or television for news and instructions.*
- ☒ *If the disaster occurs near you, check for injuries. Give first aid and get help for seriously injured people. (Before rendering First Aid be sure victim is not contaminated. Avoid direct contact if contamination is suspected.)*
- ☒ *If the disaster occurs near your home while you are there, check for damage using a flashlight. Do not light matches or candles or turn on electrical switches. Check for fires, fire hazards and other household hazards. Sniff for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly.*
- ☒ *Shut off any other damaged utilities.*
- ☒ *Confine or secure your pets.*
- ☒ *Contact your family—do not use the telephone again unless it is a life-threatening emergency.*
- ☒ *Check on your neighbors, especially those who are elderly or disabled.*

### **What should I do if I suspect I was exposed to a chemical, biological, or radiological weapon?**

First whether at home, work or traveling **be alert** to your surroundings. Be prepared to depart quickly if required to do so. At home or work, have a personal evacuation plan with both primary and alternate routes.

Practice the plan with family members and participate in your employer's regular fire/emergency drills for the workplace. You should also be familiar with community evacuation routes and evacuation alert procedures.

Secondly, **be observant** and know what signs may indicate the presence of chemical, biological, or radioactive materials.

**Chemicals agents:** Most often these agents are released as an aerosol or gas. In most cases these sprays or gases are heavier than air resulting in their widespread dispersal for only short periods of time. Chemical agents are heavily impacted by weather and wind and lend themselves to being employed where these factors can be controlled such as inside large buildings, malls, or arenas. However, even under controlled conditions, chemical dispersion can be uneven as building ventilation systems transport contaminated air well beyond the immediate incident site.

Symptoms:

- ☒ *Large numbers of people exhibiting the sudden onset of severe medical distress, e.g., vomiting, convulsions, unconsciousness, etc.*
- ☒ *The presence of strange odors or odors that are out-of-place for your location*
- ☒ *The presence of dead birds or small animals*
- ☒ *The presence of suspicious devices*

**Biological agents:** Since these agents are undetectable to the senses, be alert for suspicious devices in heavily trafficked areas. Often symptoms are delayed and mimic common ailments such as colds and flu. Be alert for illnesses within a workplace or school which appear without warning or are out-of-season. Consult a physician when in doubt as to the nature of your illness.

**Radioactive materials:** Determining if materials are radioactive requires specialized instruments. If radioactivity is suspected, avoid the area and notify authorities.

Key in protecting oneself from radiation is maximizing one's distance from suspected radioactive materials while minimizing the time there. Special care should be exercised to avoid ingesting materials suspected to be radioactive or have come into contact with radioactive materials. If in doubt avoid eating and drinking anything unless known safe.

For some types of radiation, ordinary clothing will provide adequate protection, however since this is not a universal truth assume the worst and avoid suspected contaminated areas.

### **What should I do if I believe I have come into contact with the above materials?**

Report your concerns and, if required, request medical assistance. If contamination is suspected, time is critical especially when chemicals are involved. Where possible, remove clothing and shower using ordinary soap. Even an outdoor garden hose can begin the process of decontamination until authorities arrive. In the event of biological or radiological contaminants wet your clothing before removing. This will prevent these materials from becoming airborne while disrobing.

### **Should I purchase a gas mask, chemical suit, or related protective apparel?**

While always an individual decision, MEMA does not recommend citizens purchase personal protective gear. Aside from the difficulties of having it continuously on hand, there are real dangers if the equipment is not fitted or used properly. Again, a citizen's most prudent action is to head upwind of a suspected release and contact emergency officials to provide information and receive instructions.

**What actions should I take if I believe a terrorist  
attack may have occurred?**

If in the immediate area of the materials, head upwind of the area and await the instructions of responding police, fire, or HAZMAT personnel. If not in the immediate area of the incident, turn on your radio or television to determine if guidance has been issued. Do not call 911 for information or guidance. If a decision has been made to have the community "shelter in place" you will be advised to remain in your home, school, or workplace. You will be alerted at that time as to other measures to take, e.g., Close all doors and windows and shut off ventilation systems which draw in exterior air, to minimize risk to your family.

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Maryland Emergency Management Agency.

[www.mema.state.md.us](http://www.mema.state.md.us)

**(800) 422-8799**

Maryland State Police Terrorism Hotline

[www.mdsp.org/cybertip.htm](http://www.mdsp.org/cybertip.htm)

**(410) 653-4239 MSP Public Affairs**

Maryland Department of the Environment

[www.mde.state.md.us/reference/emergency.html](http://www.mde.state.md.us/reference/emergency.html)

**(866) 633-4686**

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

[www.dhmh.state.md.us](http://www.dhmh.state.md.us)

**(877) 463-3464/ 410-767-6860**

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

[www.dnr.state.md.us/mailroom.html](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/mailroom.html)

**(877) 620-8DNR or 8367**

Maryland Department of Transportation

[www.mdot.state.md.us/email.html](http://www.mdot.state.md.us/email.html)

**(888) 713-1414**

Federal Bureau of Investigations

[www.fbi.gov/terrorinfo/terrorism.htm](http://www.fbi.gov/terrorinfo/terrorism.htm)

**(410) 265-8080**

US Freedom Corps

[www.freedomcorp.gov](http://www.freedomcorp.gov)

**877-USA-CORPS (872-2677)** (Toll Free)

#### **RELATED WEB SITES**

American Red Cross	<a href="http://www.redcross.org/">www.redcross.org/</a>
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/">www.cdc.gov/</a>
Environmental Protection Agency	<a href="http://www.epa.gov/swercepp">www.epa.gov/swercepp</a>
Federal Bureau of Investigation	<a href="http://www.fbi.gov">www.fbi.gov</a>
Federal Emergency Management Agency	<a href="http://www.fema.gov">www.fema.gov</a>
National Domestic Preparedness Office	<a href="http://www.ndpo.gov/">www.ndpo.gov/</a>
Office for Homeland Security	<a href="http://www.dhs.gov/">www.dhs.gov/</a>
U.S. Department of State – Traveling Abroad	<a href="http://www.state.gov">www.state.gov</a>

### **Maryland State Alert System**

The Maryland State Alert System is a five tier system developed to alert local authorities and citizens of increases in the threat of terrorist attack. Paralleling the Homeland Security Advisory System, it complements the national alert level and based on local assessments may be higher (but never lower) than the national level. During periods of heightened threat, citizens should be alert for further guidance on the nature of the threat and recommended individual protective measures.

#### Threat Levels

- **Low Condition (Green).** This condition is declared when there is a low risk of terrorist attacks.
- **Guarded Condition (Blue).** This condition is declared when there is a general risk of terrorist attacks.
- **Elevated Condition (Yellow).** An Elevated Condition is declared when there is a significant risk of terrorist attacks.
- **High Condition (Orange).** A High Condition is declared when there is a high risk of terrorist attacks.
- **Severe Condition (Red).** A Severe Condition reflects a severe risk of terrorist attacks. Under most circumstances, the Protective Measures for a Severe Condition are not intended to be sustained for substantial periods of time.